

August 24, 2009

Dear DCPS Principal,

As you know, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in the District of Columbia Public Schools. We want to keep the schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. We are working closely with the Mayor's Office and the District of Columbia Department of Health to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning our schools.

We have developed a Pandemic Influenza Plan in cooperation with the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency and the DC Department of Health. Please remember to update student, teacher, and staff contact information, as well as any emergency contact lists that you maintain.

You know that flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, in order to keep our schools operating and our students learning, please take the following steps to help keep students, teachers, and staff from getting sick with influenza:

- Educate and encourage students and staff to cover their mouths and noses with tissues when they cough or sneeze. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow instead of their hand when a tissue is not available. Provide them with easy access to tissues.
- Remind teachers, staff, and students to practice good hand hygiene and provide the time and supplies for them to wash their hands as often as necessary. Access to running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners is important.
- Send sick students, teachers, and staff home and advise them and their families that they should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards, or pens, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.
- Have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks available and ensure that the equipment is worn by school nurses and other staff caring for sick people at school.
- Move students, teachers, and staff to a separate room if they become sick at school until they can be sent home. Limit the number of staff who take care of the sick person and provide a surgical mask for the sick person to wear if he or she can tolerate it.
- Encourage early medical evaluation for sick students and staff who are at higher risk of complications from flu. People who get sick and who are at high risk of flu complications will benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines.

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If the flu becomes more prevalent in schools, we may take additional steps to prevent its spread such as:

- conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school;
- making changes that will increase the physical space between people such as moving desks farther apart; and
- dismissing students from school for at least 7 days if they become sick.

We are in regular communication with the DC Department of Health and you will be kept updated with new information as it becomes available. In the meantime, we have attached additional resources to help you in your school—a letter to parents, a letter and lesson plans for teachers, and posters to remind your school community of important flu prevention points.

For more information, visit the new DCPS website at <http://dcps.dc.gov> or the DC Emergency and Safety Alliance website at <http://esa.dc.gov>. Also, visit <http://doh.dc.gov> for the most current news about influenza in the District and [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) for national information.

You will be notified of immediately any changes to our policies or strategies. Thank you for your help in this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Michelle Rhee